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WAGNER'S
Tristan & Isolde

An Interpretation

BY

CARL REINHEIMER

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"There must be some indescribable inner sense, which is altogether clear and active only when the outward-facing senses are as if adream. When I, strictly, neither see nor hear distinctly, this sense is at its keenest, and shows its function as creative calm: I can call it by no other name—merely I know that this calm of mine works from within to without—with it I am at the World's Centre."—RICHARD WAGNER.

"If we are to speak in terms understanded of the people of this highest perception, it can only be done under the form of pure and primitive Buddhist teaching. Especially important is the doctrine of Reincarnation of the Soul as a basis of a truly human life."—LETTER TO ROECKEL, 1855.

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WAGNER'S
TRISTAN AND ISOLDE.

THEOSOPHY may rightly be called a master-key; and it is exceedingly interesting to note how it enables us to open up and penetrate the various realms of thought and feeling that encompass man's activity. Many are the truths cryptically expressed by the intuitive Poet, or the Genius, that would remain obscure for us but for the light which Theosophy sheds on them; many are the problems confronting the Scientist and the Sociologist of to-day whose solution is foreshadowed by Theosophy. But if it is interesting to trace how Theosophy thus illuminates the truths embodied by great men, it is equally interesting to trace how the truths which it teaches find independent witnesses and confirmation in the works of great individuals. And we know of no great man of our time in whose works Theosophy is taught, and as independently and fully confirmed, as in those of Richard Wagner. For Wagner was not acquainted with the Theosophical Society, having, indeed, completed most of his works before that was called into existence. And yet, on the independent lines along which he evolved, he came to the same eternal verities that Theosophy teaches, and gave them an exposition in his master-works in which their very essence seems to be placed before our Soul's gaze—exposition of resplendent beauty and marvellous grandeur. Man's Descent and Ascent, his psychic Constitution, Reincarnation, and Karma—all these find their home in the unique and perfect Temple of Art which Wagner's genius has called into life!

A consideration of Wagner's prose writings and correspondence would alone suffice to show how vital these truths were to him. We will confine ourselves here to a single quotation from one of his letters to Mathilde Wesendonk: "Only the profoundly conceived idea of Reincarnation could give me any consolation, since that belief shows how all at last can reach complete redemption. . . . According to this beautiful

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Buddhist belief, the spotless purity of Lohengrin finds a simple explanation in the fact that he is the continuation of Parsifal, who had to fight for his purity. Even so, Elsa in her rebirth would reach to the height of Lohengrin." Now, what Wagner here so clearly expresses in writing he expresses artistically in his Art-works, expresses it with a power and effectiveness which only his Art—the perfect union of Dramatic Action, Music, and the Poetic Word—makes possible; power and effectiveness which reach their highest development in the 'Tristan' drama.

Of Eastern origin, the legend on which this drama is founded early found its way into Europe, where it may be traced in various lands and in differing versions. Wagner was familiar with Gottfried von Strassburg's lengthy and uncouth rendering, dating from the first half of the 13th century. This, however, he completely transformed, blending what was useful in it with a new spirit which he inbreathed, and producing practically a new poem of clear-cut shape (it is reduced to the characteristic three acts), and filled with deepest spiritual significance and feeling.

There is an especial interest attached to this drama, in that it marks a new era not only in Wagner's musical development, but also in his Soul-growth. From his correspondence with M. Wesendonk (so sympathetically translated by W. Ashton Ellis) we learn that when the composition of this drama was taken in hand, Wagner's intuition (the Buddhi)—which hitherto had functioned unconsciously—had begun to act while Wagner was fully aware in his normal consciousness. Explaining the nature of the knowledge of the purely intellectual mind, bound as that is by time, space, and causality, he shows how the Buddhi, "Poetic Intuition," free from these limitations, knows its objects not only before and independently of all experience by the lower self, but also much more positively. He says: " . . . Then I plainly recognise herein the wonder of it, its total opposition to the usual view of life: whereas that view ever turns on the pivot of experience, Poetic Intuition, preceding all experience, embraces altogether of its ownest potency what first lends all experience a sense and meaning. . . Now, that which is upraised above space, time, and causality, and does not need these helps for its cognition; that which is loosed from

these conditions of finitude, and whereof Schiller so finely says that it alone is *wahr* (true) because it never *war* (was); this which is totally incomprehensible by the common view of the world, only the poet (read Intuitive Mind) cognises with that full prefigurement residing in himself, and governing all his fashionings, —this Something that is surer and more definite than any other object of cognition, albeit it bears on itself not one attribute of the world which we know by experience. . . . The supreme marvel must be, though if that foreknown essential Something should enter at last the poet's own experience. . . . That phenomenon I have observed the most surprisingly in my own case. With my poetic conceptions I have been so far ahead of my experiences that I may consider my moral development as almost exclusively induced and brought about by those conceptions: Flying Dutchman, Tannhauser, Lohengrin, Niebelungs, Wodan—which all existed earlier in my head than my experience. But the marvellous relation in which I stand to the Tristan now, you will easily perceive yourself: I say it openly, since it is an observation due to the initiated mind, though not to the world, that never has an idea so definitely passed into experience."

It is this inner modification, this coming into conscious relationship with the Buddhi, which is largely accountable for the marvellous development in Wagner's music at this stage; for from the 'Tristan' he is "fully himself," and certainly we must look to that for the equally great change in his poetry. In his previous dramas, which all deal with various soul-stages, he operates rather "on the whole," telling us by events and scenes rather than by so many words of these soul-stages and the experiences therein. It is different in the 'Tristan' drama. Here he treats in great detail of the Ego and its history; and any one but slightly acquainted with Theosophy and able to read the original should have no difficulty in following the unmistakable intention of the poem. Somewhat difficult of translation, if metre, rhyme (alliteration), and musical exigencies are all to be taken into account, the poetic intention has unfortunately been almost entirely sacrificed in the various translations with which we are familiar; and we have endeavoured, in the quotations to be used subsequently, principally to restore the original significance.

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The first Act is largely explanatory of the previous history of the actors. Thus Isolde's wild outburst, in which she vainly exhorts the storm and the sea to shatter the ship which is conveying her to Cornwall, reveals to us the dynamic nature of Buddhi, all-powerful (as we are told) on its own plane; reveals to us Isolde as greatly powerless at present, because separated from her true home, her "mother," and obliged to work through her lower aspect, still unharmonised and at variance with her. "Degenerate race! Unworthy Descent! Where, oh mother, hast given the might that commands the wave and the tempest? Oh! fallen state of magic art, that now only knows balms to brew!" The musical motive accompanying this passage, and recurring several times at significant conjunctions—as pointed out by A. L. Cleather and Basil Crump in their admirable treatise on this subject—leaves no doubt in the mind as to the "mother" and her "magic art." The ship itself becomes for us the symbol of the physical plane, closely confined by Time and Space, on which the two "lovers" meet anew in a fresh incarnation. Isolde's nature is further emphasised when she exclaims, pointing at herself: "Death-consecrated Heart"; and, pointing at Tristan, "Death-consecrated Head." She the Intuition, the representative of the "Heart" doctrine; he the Self, identifying Itself for the time being with the "Head," the Manas! Isolde's relative powerlessness—which is, however, slowly becoming transformed into effectiveness as by degrees the situation becomes more and more "inward"—is strikingly offset by the aspect that Tristan wears at this point of the drama, and which is well characterised by Brangaene, Isolde's attendant and confidante. "The flower of creation, the most renowned of men, and peerless, highest hero that ever fame has known," etc., is how she styles him.

Then we are made familiar with Tristan's previous and first trip to Ireland, where he, wounded, and disguised as "Tantris" sought the cure that only Isolde could encompass. This mutation of Tristan into "Tantris"—which is Wagner's own invention* and which leaves the Individual the same, though the name changes—is surely a skilful and an obvious indication that it was in a previous incarnation that the present Tristan had the experiences that "Tantris" under-

* not true

went! In the present life he will quickly run through the various stages of development to which he attained in the previous life, even as the child in its antenatal life runs through all the sub-human stages. Thus the significant "look" incident of the previous incarnation will find a replica in this existence, and will mark, at the same time, the starting-point for new and further development. Isolde, who had recognised in the wounded "Tantris" the slayer of Morold, her relation and affianced, stood before him in his bed, ready to slay him with his own sword, when *their eyes met*, and the arm, upraised to strike, sank back by her side.

Let us put for Morold the lower human nature, which can be entirely vanquished only with the aid, or by the grace, of the Higher Self—as in 'Tannhäuser,' where the unceasing flow of Elisabeth's prayer is needed to accomplish his salvation—and this *meeting of the eyes* subtly becomes for us the symbol of Tristan's first initiation—the first conscious relationship with the Buddhi. We shall see in the following how naturally therefrom flows his further development, we shall witness his second Great Initiation during this life, to be followed by the third and last Initiation in 'Parsifal.' Says Mrs. Besant in "A Study in Consciousness": "On the next two planes, the spiritual—those of wisdom and power, the buddhic and the atmic—goes on the specific evolution of the Initiate after the first of the Great Initiations."

Meeting, then, Isolde anew on board the ship, Tristan (who does not remember his experiences of the previous life, but who has risen, as we have seen, to the highest point of outer perfection) is ready to be tried for a higher life. He is brought to this point by living perfectly his Dharma—by his strict adherence to "Duty" and "Honour," these outer standards; for, as he tells us, it was for these that he came to Ireland to woo Isolde for the king. Confused and bewildered in the presence of her who inspires him with dim forebodings, yet daring not, as she taunts him, to "meet her look," he asks: "Where are we?" "Near the goal! Shall I obtain atonement?" (at—one—ment) comes the significant reply. He, however, can only be true to himself and faithful to the highest that as yet he knows: to that he is ready to sacrifice his life, and, unshaken to the end he drinks to the

" atonement pledge ": " Tristan's Honour—Highest Faith! Tristan's Anguish—Bravest Might! Oblivion's welcome draught, undreaded be thou quaff'd."

This note of Self-sacrifice (he believed it to be a " death-drink ") was all that was needed to bring about the harmony of the higher life; and when he now drinks out of the cup which Isolde has handed him (she consuming the remaining half) we see in this well-chosen symbolism the " atonement " at last. Again do *they look long and with immoveable demeanour into each other's eyes.* When they regain voice they give expression in a glowing duet to the new state of consciousness they have entered. All that has taken place will thus be seen to be a rapid repetition of the previous life's experiences. It is also an embodiment of Wagner's own peculiar soul-development spoken of above—the " Head " reaching the " Heart," the Intellect consciously coming under the guidance of the Intuition.

In the next Act takes place the second of the Great Initiations, the nature of which and the expansion of Consciousness attaching to it being treated in great detail.

Our attention in the second Act is at once arrested by the burning torch before Isolde's chamber. Expressive symbol of the " Day "—of Illusion, Maya—its extinction will be followed by the " Night " of Spiritual Verity, into the mystery nature of which we are presently to be initiated. In vain does Brangaene, the Kama-Manas, try to prevent this extinction, for to her the advent of " Night " means effacement. Argument after argument she brings to bear; but these, looked at from the wider standpoint of Isolde, the Pure Reason, become expanded, and take on a different and even an opposite character. Thus her warning regarding Melot's treacheries is met by Isolde's declaration—" He serves me better than thou "; for " he opens for him (Tristan) what to me thou wouldst bar." Melot, the Kamic Self, is here thought of as human love which bears in itself the seeds of the Higher Love. When Brangaene finally breaks out into lamentations and self-reproach for having, contrary to Isolde's directions and therefore at her own responsibility, substituted the " Love-Potion " for the " Death-Potion," she is again met by the greater truth from Isolde's

lips: "Thy work? O foolish girl! Frau Minne dost thou not know? Not all her magic might? Of noblest will the queen is she, the World Itself she wards to light! Life and death she holds in her hands, and weaves from joy and woe. In love she changeth hate. The death-design which, boldly daring, I framed, Frau Minne soon from my hands had claimed. The death-devoted she took in hand, shaping the work to her command. How she may bend it, how she may end it; what she may make me, wheresoever take me, hers I am now solely—so let me obey her wholly!"

Frau Minne, "who wards the world itself to light," is, perhaps, the cosmic aspect of Buddhi—the second Person of the Trinity, the "Mother," personifying in a sense the "Will of Ishvara," the only Will and Source of the Universe, the only Dramatist and Actor of the World-Drama with whom Isolde now is seen ready, consciously, to identify herself by uttermost self-surrender. In connection with this there is a striking passage, to which we may have to refer again, in *The Voice of the Silence*:—" . . . but let the fiery power retire into the inmost chamber, the chamber of the heart, and the abode of the *World's Mother*"—of which the commentator remarks that the "fiery power" is Kundalinî, and the "power" and the "World Mother" are names given to Kundalinî—one of the mystic Yogî powers. "It is Buddhi considered as an active instead of a passive principle. . ." An equally striking passage we adduce from Wagner's correspondence with Mathilde Wesendonk: " . . . and every triste experience, invading his heart from without, he must needs offer up with a noble's sense of exaltation as a sacrifice due to, and in sympathy with, the higher ends of the World-Spirit, which moulds from out Itself experiences wherein to suffer, and through those sufferings to lift itself still higher"—which we will round up with the conclusion to the extract from Wagner's letter quoted at the commencement: "Thus all the terrible tragedy of life is seen to be nothing but the sense of separateness in Time and Space. But as Time and Space are only our modes of perception, and outside of that have no reality, to the perfect seer the most intense tragic grief can only be explained as the delusion of the individual being. I believe it is so. . . ." Such the deepest realities of Life as disclosed by the Pure Reason; such

the themes that, unbeknown by the great mass of Wagner adorers, are the very essence of his Art-works!

At last the torch is extinct, and the "lovers" are together in the "Night." This spiritual state is described as "overpow'ring, high exalting, high to heav'n world-outsoaring!" There is here, and throughout this second Act, a strong reminiscence of the language used by many mystics who, having caught a glimpse of this mighty reality, are trying to convey their impressions to the world; and a particularly striking similarity may be found in *The Dark Night of the Soul*, by St. John of the Cross, in which the same subject is treated. But what a marvellous difference there is between the bare intellectual exposition of the mystic and Wagner's artistic representation! All mystics join in deploring their utter inability to convey their experiences at all adequately. Wagner's art, on the other hand, enabled him to suggest and reflect these transcendental realities in a very living manner. And it is because his art itself is a true reflection of Nature, that it possesses this suggestive power. Harmoniously uniting the Poetic Word, Music, and Dramatic Action, to express one and the same reality, it reflects the triplicity in all of Nature's manifestations—the mental, emotional, and physical worlds and aspects of Man—which it is even able to transcend, just as Man is able to transcend them when he has balanced these three aspects and is "established in harmony." It was not a vain boast on Wagner's part when he claimed to be able, by the medium of his art, to reach the intuition of his public.

It would be necessary from this point of the drama onward to quote almost every word in order to show how Isolde, step by step, draws Tristan on to her own level. It is an unfoldment of consciousness that we witness; and the first step she takes is to make Tristan self-conscious. "In darkness thou, in light am I," she says, pointing out, at once, the relativity of the planes (which are all both "light" or "dark," according to the state of evolution reached, or the standpoint from which they are regarded), and the distance that is still separating Tristan from her and which he is to travel. Tristan's reply is a plaintive recognition of the evil power of the "Day": "The Day! The Day! This Daylight deceiving, the hardest of foes! Is there a pain, is there a woe, which wakes not his hateful

glow?" But he is not long left to look to the Not-Self for the cause of his woes. "In thine own heart, Isolde says, he ('Day') held sway, all-defying, strong in Tristan: Tristan—who me betrayed. Was not by Day he faithless made, when he to Ireland lightly strayed, to woo me for the king?" Made introspective, he explains how she, Isolde, wore so different an aspect then, while he was glamoured by the "Day," the "dazzling glow of pomp and might" lit up by "the Noon-Day Sun of Worldly Honours," which had penetrated through his head to his heart's inmost shrine, and he continues: "What there in still, chaste Night dark and deep hidden wakes, what not by knowledge, and free from illusion, dawning, there I beheld: an image of such beauty that eyes dared not to view." This, he continues, he praised aloud before the host as the fairest bride for a king. When thereupon some individuals, jealous of his renown, began to cast aspersions upon him, he "straightway, in order to guard Honour and Fame," went to Ireland. If we take this somewhat cryptic passage in conjunction with the extract from "The Voice of the Silence" quoted previously, it will become clear to us that Tristan here traces the process by which he first became aware of Isolde, the Buddhi, viz., by penetrating into his "heart's inmost shrine," the "Abode of the World's Mother," which was disclosed to him not by a process of reasoning, but by an exercise of the Buddhic faculty: "what not by knowledge, and free from illusion, dawning there I beheld"—"knowledge" standing here for the knowledge of the lower, the ratiocinative, mind. It was not by this, but by what Wagner calls the "Poetic Intuition," that the Buddhic Self, "free from illusion," dawned upon his consciousness. Being, however, scarce conscious in his normal waking self of the full import of the "image of such beauty that 'eyes' dared not to view," he had, in the first rush of the new life, blazed forth the knowledge that thus came to him; and being, moreover, in his moral self still under the sway of illusion, he had, obeying that, gone to Ireland "to guard Honour and Fame." Thus he "betrayed" Isolde, by disregarding the promptings of the Higher Self.

Having, in this way, made him aware of his former standpoint and motives, Isolde proceeds to enlighten him regarding her own. She, too, had been

imposed upon to a certain degree by the "Day" while in the lower realms, where Tristan persisted to appear as her enemy. And she had hated this appearance with a hatred as intense as her love, because it was the opposite pole of that love. But all the time her conscious purpose had been: "That which a traitor made thee seem, the light of Day, I sought to fly: Away into Night we two should hie, where my heart did foresee the end of deceit, where illusion's spell should cease. There we should live in eternal love. United with me I sought to die with thee."

The Higher Self, we are told, is ever striving to draw Its lower aspect to Its own level. Tristan then declares that on the threshold of communion, just before the consummation of the "love potion," a "feeling deep and true" told him what the atonement should do; and that "then there arose in mild and lofty might within my bosom Night—my Day was ended quite!" Isolde's efforts took effect; Intuition began to dawn in his consciousness as a "feeling deep and true," and brought him the knowledge that "burns up illusion"—his "day was ended quite." Up to this their review has been of that which was before the atonement. Isolde now proceeds to examine what followed. She says: "Alas, the deceitful potion gave thee back to the Day!" The potion, his Karma, challenged when the Greater Life dawned upon him, did not fail to have its effect. It is ever so! But to Tristan's now enlightened intellect the relativity of Evil is seen at a glance—he perceives its purpose, and he praises the magic of the drink; for: "through the Door of Death through which it flowed, widely open to me it showed wherein before but in dreams I was awake: the wondrous realm of Night!" His eye had become *nachtsichtig*, *i.e.*, able to see in the Night; and the Day's glamouring light had lost all power over him: for "those whom Night has bless'd the sight are blinded no more by its flickering flashes. Those who Death's dark Night loving behold, whom She her deep secret has told" are swayed no longer by Honour and Fame and all the worldly illusions; but: "In the Daylight's empty thronging they know one only longing: they long to hie to holy Night where unending, only true, Love eternally laughs." The duet that follows, to music of the most sacred nature and incomparable beauty, is an expression of

this yearning, it is an aspiration bringing in its train a further step in his enlightenment—the realisation of his vital Unity with the world: "E'en then, I am the World!"—ending up with the definite, conscious effort towards freedom from the wheel of rebirth: "Ne'er again to waken, illusion-freed, blest conscious desire!"

Having initiated Tristan so far, having enabled him to rise in consciousness to this realisation of Unity, Isolde now proceeds to the last and supreme act of the Initiation. Pointing out to him that on his return to the "Day," for the Initiation must come to an end, their "Love" may again be affected by Day or Death, she nerves Tristan to a mighty effort of Will. Defying Death, he declares that their Love, this Love Immortal, shall never die; and "if never dies his Love, how then can Tristan die?" This very act of will breaks down the last barriers to their complete mystic union. It is the will to cease living in the lower self in order that the Higher Self may fully manifest, "to live eternally in Love"—it is a second and a conscious Self-sacrifice on his part, heralding another expansion of consciousness in which the at-one-ment becomes definite. "Give up thy life if thou wouldst live," says *The Voice of the Silence*. Rising with ecstatic gesture, Isolde now flings out a defiance to "Day"—"Ever enfold us, Night!" and together they invoke "Night" to receive them . . . "Now end all our anguish, gracious Death, yearningly longed-for Death of Love. In thine embracing, vowed to Thee, most holy upraising—from re-wakening's dread now free. How conceive it, How to leave it, this our rapture far from Sunlight!" etc. As a result we get Tristan's declaration: "Tristan thou, I Isolde—no more Tristan," and Isolde's identical avowal: "Thou Isolde, Tristan I—no more Isolde!" And, describing this mystic state, they sing together—

Nameless state!
Inseparate!
New cognition—
New volition—
Endless, conscious unity!
In our bosoms gleam
Love-delights supreme!

Thus it is ever only when the note of Sacrifice, "from which all things proceed," is sounded, that Tristan achieves another step in his evolution. At the consummation of the "Love-Potion" he was prepared to

sacrifice his life to a Something that he but dimly felt; now he does so with conscious purpose. In the last Act it is again the act of supreme Sacrifice that is followed by final liberation.

The Initiation is brought to a close by the arrival of the king and his suite. The king, who represents the best type of an Intellect unenlightened by Buddhi, cannot at all understand what he witnesses. To his bewilderment and grievance, Tristan can only reply: "O king, I cannot tell thee truly, for never couldst thou know!" Turning, without further ado, to Isolde, he asks if she will follow him where now he is going: "It is the dark abode of Night from whence I first came forth to light," etc. Isolde affirms her readiness to follow him, and continues: "How could I shun the land by which the World is spann'd?" etc. It is to be noted here that it is Isolde who now follows; for Tristan, the Ego, having learned to identify himself with the Buddhi, is preparing to enter the Atmic plane from which (as we shall see at the end of the drama) Isolde, herself, becomes "Light" or Maya—for the plane of Buddhi still knows duality, whereas "Brahman is All," and there is nothing else.

"The World has ever crucified its Great, who, perceiving the truth, tried to teach it," says Goethe; and the wound which Melot inflicts upon Tristan is the wound dealt out by the world—it is the outer and visible sign of Tristan's Sacrifice.

In the third, and last, Act, Tristan is to live in the world the lessons of the Initiation, and to weave them into his being. He descends a last time into the world of action, there to expand into the full flower of man, before stripping off every vestige of manhood, and standing forth a Being Divine—a very God! Living the life of Self-Sacrifice, the only life for him who has risen to this eminence, he is led to the portals of the third, and last, Great Initiation, wherein the Buddhi is transcended, and the "Oneness with the Father" is realised—ultimately to be established in the "Divine Man," when the Ego, now as Parsifal, takes upon Himself the heavy burden of the "Saviour of the World."* Saith Shri Krishna in the

* Students are referred to the splendid interpretation of "Parsifal" by Mr. A. S. Banks.—Theo. Publ. Society, pr. 6d.

Bhagavad Gîtâ: "The Sages, united to the Pure Reason, renounce the fruit which action yieldeth, and, liberated from the bonds of birth, they go to the blissful seat."

At the opening of the Act the wounded Tristan is lying on a couch in a swoon. This swoon represents the state of consciousness known as Sushuptî, the one beyond the dream state; and the nature of the experiences therein is presently explained. Tristan is recalled to waking consciousness by the tune from the shepherd's reed pipe. This tune of sadness and everlasting sameness is the *Leitmotif* of human life—it is the emblem of the Karmic cycles, in which the soul suffers and learns to rise superior. It is full of sadness, because all life, apart from the One, knows sufferings and illusions due to its limitations. Tristan comes back to the world of action "with eyes now wholly opened," as he tells us. He is fully conscious, in the "Day," of his Higher Self and of his destiny, and he proceeds to tell Kurwenal of his experiences during the swoon. "Where I awoke I stayed not; but where I stayed I can indeed not tell thee. I was —where I have been from ever—whereto for e'er I go: in the endless realm of the World—Night. But one knowledge there obtaineth: Divine, eternal All-Oblivion!" Impossible for him to tell Kurwenal where he had stayed! Impossible, ever, to express by the medium of intellectual conceptions the nature of Life and Consciousness on the Atmic Plane! Past and Future, Self and Not-Self, all the children of the "knowledge of ignorance" (which all purely intellectual knowledge is) vanish, and are alike swallowed up in an Ever-Present, in the "One" in whom all is, and "Who is All." So transcendent is this "knowledge," this reality, from the standpoint of the Manas, that it is spoken of in negative terms—as "All-Oblivion"—in order to indicate how absolutely it is beyond any positive conception of the Mind.

Tristan, continuing, tells that he comes back from this region in order to find Isolde—to attain to complete union with the Buddhi while in the body, even as he had attained during the Initiation. And as a man in his dying moments reviews the panorama of his life, so also Tristan, who is dying to his lower nature, reviews the panorama of his many lives—his "Birth," the "Deaths" of his "Father" and "Mother,"

taking place, respectively, before and at his "Birth." It is the same story that meets us in the 'Ring,' where Siegfried's father and mother meet their fate at a similar conjunction; and again we encounter a similarity in 'Parsifal.' Its significance is most apparent, perhaps, in the 'Ring,' where Siegmund and Sieglinde distinctly represent "heroic Man," direct descended, and but one step removed, from the Gods, while Siegfried represents young Humanity. The "ancient tune" of the shepherd's reed pipe (which, as said before, typifies the continuous thread of the Karmic cycles) accompanied, we are informed, these incidents of the Involution as well as it accompanies the process of Evolution which we follow in Tristan—for the web of Karma begins to be spun from the very "forth-going from the Father." Continuing his review, Tristan now dwells on his first Great Initiation in Ireland, and the consummation of the "Love-potion": "This terrible draught! 'Twas I! 'Twas I by whom it was brewed! From fathers' pain and mothers' fears, from past and present lovers' tears, from laughter and sorrow, smiling and sadness, have I prepared this potion of madness!" If the "ancient tune" represents the ever-recurring cycles of Karmic existence, the "draught" is the very Karma itself, or the experiences which the soul's Karma, life after life, engenders, leading to an appreciation of the "pairs of opposites" of "laughter and sorrow," etc., and ultimate release therefrom.

The review of the past is ended, and Tristan now directs his attention to the present. He asks if there is no ship yet in sight. Kurwenal had sent to Ireland for Isolde, and was momentarily expecting the ship that was to bring her; but as yet it is not seen. It is here that we get a clear reference to the clairvoyant faculties in Tristan—faculties which (we are told) are the natural concomitants of so highly evolved a state. In words of marvellous beauty Tristan tells of the ship bearing Isolde: "See'st thou not how she blissful, blithe, and tender nigher draws through ocean's splendour? On rapturous billows, lightly lifting, t'ward the land she is drifting," etc. And: "What I see so well and plainly let not thine eyes seek vainly." All this, of course, before the ship is actually in sight. When it does, at last, appear, Tristan's joy and excitement know no bounds, for it means that the last fetter

is about to be broken. "Aha! oh joy!" he says, "*Bright in Daylight* cometh Isolde!" Full Illumination has come at last, even as it came to the Buddha under the bodhi tree, and the drop has become ready to merge into the ocean. All his life had been a continuous sacrifice, as shown by his wound; now he tears away the bandage, letting flow his life-blood in token of the absoluteness of the Self-surrender: "Now fade, oh World, in my jubilant haste!"

From without comes the voice of Isolde, calling his name—to which he replies in utmost excitement, itself symbolical of the intensity of the Life on that plane: "What, do I *hear* the light?" Isolde herself, the Buddhi, here becomes Maya, for Tristan has reached the threshold of the Atmic plane, on which there is not Buddhi nor aught but One. His "death" at this point in the arms of Isolde may betoken the cessation of the personal self. The after-death condition is fitly declared to us by Isolde; for, as Mrs. Besant says, "... none may hope to understand by the exertion of the intellect, by the use of the reason pure and simple, this final mystery. The spiritual intuition is necessary, and an insight that goes beyond the power of the Manas, the mind, and calls into activity Buddhi as the vehicle of the Self." Thus Isolde alone of the bystanders is able to follow, and to suggest to our imagination what takes place. "Do I only hear this chaunting?" etc. To the accompaniment of music, at once mysterious and pacifying, which rises and swells, surges and resurges, with unearthly harmony, bursting finally into an ocean of sound—into Nirvanâ itself—she sings to words which, starting from the concrete form of Tristan's body, make effort after effort, together with the music, to lift us by ever-rising waves of feeling and conceptions to the highest pinnacle that thought and imagination may climb. This song, which, dying, she sings, reconciles and unifies all in the One Life, the *Welt-Atem* or World-Breath—the "Breath of Brahm," or the "Word that was in the Beginning," with which it ends, the closing lines forming a most striking resemblance to a description in one of the upanishads: "In the Svara (Breath) are the Vedas and the Shâstras, *and in the Svara is music. All the world is the Svara; Svara is the Spirit itself.*" All translations of this sublime poetic passage can be but feeble reflections of the

original, and we offer no further apology for the effort we have made, and with which we end :—

Sweet, so softly, he is smiling.
How his eyes he opes enraptured!
See, oh friends, do ye not see
Ever lighter, all-illuming,
Star encircled how he soars?
See ye not how his heart
With courage swells, from his bosom
Rapture wells? From his lips
By Love beguiled, sweetest breath
Floats soft and mild?
Friends, oh see, feel and see ye not?
Do I only hear this chaunting
Which so wondrously and haunting,
From him winging, soft is ringing;
From him stealing, all-revealing
Me surroundeth, high up-boundeth,
Joy bestowing deep resoundeth?
Clearer growing, round me flowing,
Are these winds sweet rapture shedding?
Are they waves of glory spreading?
How they swell and round me glisten!
Shall I breathe them? Shall I listen?
Shall I dive, without resistance
Breathe out joyful mine existence?
In the sway and the swell—
In the Harmony-Spell—
In the World-Spirit's (World-Breath's)
Pulsating All to drown—go down—
Unconscious—
Highest Bliss!

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